



EMC News

September 3, 2003

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I hope you have all enjoyed your summer break. On July 19 the EMC was mentioned twice on the editorial page of the Ithaca Journal, concerning our continued involvement in the Lake Source Cooling project. It is clear that our community considers us experts and effective watchdogs. We must strive to maintain this respect as we tackle new issues, and continue our tradition of well-informed, rational arguments that support our positions. The current County budget crisis indicates that volunteer efforts like ours will assume even greater importance in the coming years. Your work is welcomed and appreciated.

Submitted by Steve Nicholson

MUNICIPAL REPORT -- TOWN OF DRYDEN

All sorts of things are happening in Dryden, but three main ones are:

1. They are discussing annexation of Town land to bring Village water in to allow the Department of Transportation to build on Ellis Road.
2. The road maintenance problems are still going on with questions as to rights-of-way and interpretations of the lawsuit decision still ongoing.
3. There is a public hearing scheduled to change the Conservation Advisory Council to an official Conservation Board (The Board has the power to review land use proposals in open space areas identified in the Town's Open Space Inventory).

Submitted by Joyce Gerbasi

MUNICIPAL REPORT -- TOWN OF CAROLINE

- The new Planning Board is still gathering data to determine the policy regarding the 70 streetlights in the Town of Caroline. Lights that do not meet town-wide funding eligibility will be placed within the appropriate hamlet special lighting district boundaries. The Town Board will provide a further period of public comment prior to resolutions to re-establish the historical hamlet special lighting districts. The lighting committee recommended turning off about 30 lights. I suggested that any environmental benefits of turning off lights be included in the new policy.
- In July, the Town Board officially charged the Planning Board with the creation of a comprehensive plan for the Town. The process of comprehensive planning offers town residents the opportunity to come together to define their values and visions, encompassing the issues of transportation, housing, agriculture, open space, water quality, facility and infrastructure development, economic development, recreation, historic preservation and neighborhood vitality.
- Members of the Planning Board attended a Planning Coalition Meeting where the Town of Danby presented its Comprehensive Plan. Ed Marx and Joan Jurkowich discussed a contract with the County for Municipal

Planning Services. They are interested in setting up a three-year plan, at a cost of \$1600 per year.

- The Town Board passed a resolution to provide an Agricultural Property Tax Exemption for the Caroline Fire Protection District. This is to let the farmers and the public know how important open space and an active farming community are to the Town.
- NYS DEC would like to purchase roughly 33 acres on Hammond Hill Road. This parcel adjoins already existing state lands. The purpose of this project would consolidate the land with existing state forest lands for better management of the area.
- In regard to the land swap on Bald Hill Road, Cornell is going to order that the parcel be re-appraised and that all of the parcels involved be surveyed.
- A \$100,000 grant has been received for a Natural Stream Restoration Design Project, working on a 3,000 to 4,000 feet creek section in the Speedsville area.

Submitted by Steve Nicholson

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

The ERC last met on July 22. Our first guest was Kathryn Engel, representing the Finger Lakes Forest Watch Congress (FLFWC). She presented their "Grass Roots Alternative" to the proposed Fingerlakes National Forest Management Plan, put forth by the U. S. Forest Service. The goal of the FLFWC is to get endorsements for their alternative plan, also known as the "Forest Watch Consensus" which is presented as a form letter. The ERC has edited the form letter and will present a resolution of support for it to the EMC at the upcoming meeting.

Our second guest was EMC member Kenny Christianson, who asked us to review, edit and endorse a letter he prepared that addressed issues concerning the proposed City of Ithaca Coal Tar Cleanup project. The committee approved a version of the letter and forwarded it to the appropriate persons/agencies.

We continued our review of the Intermunicipal Wastewater Treatment DEIS and prepared a list of comments and recommendations that were forwarded to the DEC. Subsequent to the meeting, a subcommittee met to develop an Op-Ed letter, aimed at the Ithaca Journal, to further express our concerns about the proposed actions. The letter remains a work in process.

We briefly considered the Snowmobile Grant Program application that is a yearly process that supplies state funds to snowmobile groups for trail maintenance and development. Our concern is about snowmobile trails in and near Unique Natural Areas in the county. Two EMC members are investigating this matter.

We completed our recommendations for a County SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review Act) Type I Actions list and will present it and a recommendation for its approval by the EMC at the next meeting. SEQR Type I actions are those activities, usually involving construction or destruction, that have a sufficient potential for a negative environmental impact that state law requires the preparation of a Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF). The EAF is then reviewed by the appropriate persons/agencies to determine if the proposed action will have sufficient environmental impact to require further documentation, comment and review to determine how best to mitigate the effects of the proposed action on the environment. One of the primary tasks of the ERC is to review and comment on these EAFs, when the proposed action falls under the County's jurisdiction, and if they so warrant, the Draft Environmental Impact Statements that follow. The New York State SEQR Type I. Actions list specifies the minimum criteria for an action that triggers a Full EAF. Counties and municipalities may adopt more restrictive triggers, but not less. The ERC has reviewed both the State and City of Ithaca lists and prepared a list of triggers which is more restrictive than the State list, but quite comparable with the City list. We felt that these proposed guidelines will better suit the needs of Tompkins County.

Submitted by Steve Uzmann

GREEN BUILDINGS OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, October 4, will mark the second year of the Northeast Green Buildings Open House, which is held in conjunction with the American Solar Energy Society's National Solar Tour. Sponsored by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, the Open House offers a unique opportunity for members of the public to see renewable energy and other green building technologies at work; for homeowners to showcase their buildings; and for green builders and architects to advertise their work and products. On the day of the event, homeowners will be on site to describe their green building features and answer questions.

Just a few years ago, the home of Steve and Cindy Nicholson was the only local residence offering the Solar tour. This year there may be as many as 20 homeowners participating! This places the Ithaca area at or near the top nationally for local participation in the Open House. If you have not yet seen houses on this tour, do not delay another year, visit www.nesea.org to learn the location of nearby homes, go there and learn why New York State is one of the best places to install solar electric systems. As all homeowners will tell you, a no risk investment in energy efficiency and solar equipment will be a very satisfying experience.

To register to attend the Solar Home Tour, phone Cooperative Extension at 272-2292.

Submitted by Steve Nicholson

VACANT SEATS

Christian Boissonnas has resigned from EMC and WRC in order to move to the Midwest. He hopes to be involved in environmental issues at the local level in his new location.

The EMC now has the following vacancies: Village of Dryden, Village of Freeville, Village of Groton, Village of Trumansburg, City of Ithaca, Town of Enfield, Town of Groton, Town of Newfield and Town of Ulysses.

We will be gearing up for our annual membership drive in October – Stay tuned for more!

Don't Forget!!

**The next EMC meeting will be
September 10th!**

TWENTY HYDROGEN MYTHS

Recent public interest in hydrogen has elicited a great deal of conflicting, confusing, and often ill-informed commentary. Condensed in the Summer 2003 newsletter from the Rocky Mountain Institute, Amory Lovins presents a Hydrogen Primer. He explains why the hydrogen transition is possible now, and debunks the many myths that are stalling it. Here are some examples:

Myth #2. Hydrogen is too dangerous, explosive, or "volatile" for common use as a fuel.

Myth #8. Compressing hydrogen for automotive storage tanks takes too much energy.

Myth #9. Hydrogen is too expensive to compete with gasoline.

Myth #12. Since renewables are currently too costly, hydrogen would have to be made from fossil fuels or nuclear energy.

Myth #14. A large-scale hydrogen economy would harm the Earth's climate, water balance, or atmospheric chemistry.

Amory writes: "The oft-described technical obstacles to a hydrogen economy - storage, safety, and the cost of the hydrogen and its distribution infrastructure - have already been sufficiently resolved to support rapid deployment starting now. No technological breakthroughs are needed, although many will probably continue to occur. The hydrogen transition should not need enormous investments in addition to those that the energy industries are already making. Instead, it will displace many of those investments. Hydrogen deployment may well need less net capital than business-as-usual, and should be largely self-financing from its revenues. A well-designed hydrogen transition will also use little more, no more, or quite possibly less natural gas than business-as-usual. Most of the hydrogen needed to displace the world's gasoline is already being produced for other purposes, including making gasoline. A well-designed hydrogen transition could resolve most of the environmental problems of the current fossil-fuel system without making new ones, and can greatly enhance security."

To view the whole paper, visit www.rmi.org
Submitted by Steve Nicholson